

REMARKS

This application has been reviewed in light of the Office Action dated December 9, 2002. Claims 101-124 are presented for examination. Claims 101, 104, 105, 108, 110-112, 115, 116, 118, 119, and 121-124 have been amended to define more clearly what Applicant regards as his invention. Claims 101, 104, 112, 115, and 121-124 are in independent form. Favorable reconsideration is requested.

The Office Action objected to claims 105, 108, 116, and 119 for informalities noted in paragraph 3 of the Office Action.

Applicant has amended claims 105 and 116 to remove the phrases “the data” and “the resulting data”. Further, claim 105 has been amended to recite that office apparatus further comprises means for managing information indicating which process or processes of the series of processes described in the work flow have been processed. Support for this feature is found at least at page 25, line 24 to page 26, line 19 of the specification describing steps S605 and S606 of Figure 6. Claim 116 is a method claim corresponding to apparatus claim 105.

With regards to claims 108 and 119, Applicant has amended the phrase in issue to now read “. . . reserved for the agent information while retaining the image data for printing processed by the agent information.” Thus, the memory area reserved for the agent information is released, and the image data for printing, processed by the agent information, is retained.

Applicant submits that the objections to claims 105, 108, 116, and 119 have been obviated, and respectfully requests the withdrawal of the objections.

Claims 101-124 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Yoshiaki* (JP11-110143-A).

As shown above, Applicant has amended independent claims 101, 104, 112, 115, and 121-124 in terms that more clearly define what Applicant is claiming. Applicant submits that these amended independent claims, together with the remaining claims dependent thereon, are patentably distinct from the cited prior art for at least the following reasons.

The aspect of the present invention set forth in claim 101 is an office apparatus which can be connected to an external apparatus via a network. The office apparatus comprises reception control means for controlling a reception process of receiving agent information including a command train and data, control means for controlling a processing mechanism of the office apparatus by executing, based on the command train included in the received agent information, a control program that controls the processing mechanism, and memory management means for managing a memory area for executing the command train included in the received agent information. The office apparatus further comprises transmission control means for controlling, responsive to the control means terminating execution of the control program based on the command train, a transmission process of transmitting a process end notice to the external apparatus so as to cause a display unit of the external apparatus to display a process end confirmation

window, obtainment means for obtaining a reply to the process end notice from the external apparatus, where the memory management means releases the memory area for executing the command train included in the received agent information in response to the obtainment means obtaining the reply from the external apparatus.

Among the important features of claim 101 are (1) the memory management means that manages a memory area for executing the command train included in the received agent information, the transmission control means that controls, responsive to the control means terminating execution of the control program based on the command train, a transmission process of transmitting a process end notice to the external apparatus so as to cause a display unit of the external apparatus to display a process end confirmation window, (2) the obtainment means that obtains a reply to the process end notice from the external apparatus, and (3) the feature that the memory management means releases the memory area for executing the command train included in the received agent information in response to the obtainment means obtaining the reply from the external apparatus.

The Examiner correctly states that *Yoshiaki* does not teach a transmission control means for controlling, responsive to the control means terminating execution of the control program based on the command train, a transmission process of transmitting a process end notice to the external apparatus so as to cause a display unit of the external apparatus to display a process end confirmation window, and obtainment means for obtaining a reply to the process end notice from the external apparatus, where the memory

management means releases the memory area in response to the obtainment means obtaining the reply from the external apparatus.

The Office Action asserts that it is obvious that the “Yoshiaki system must have a memory management means, held under the operating system, for reserving a memory area for the execution of a printing job, because each printing job requires memory space for storing data and the execution of programs”. Because the claim 1 apparatus is directed to dynamic memory management, and not merely static memory management, timing of the memory release is important. Accordingly, as claimed in claim 101, the memory management means releases the memory area for executing the command train included in the received agent information in response to the obtainment means obtaining the reply from the external apparatus. However, nothing has been found in *Yoshiaki* that teaches or suggests a memory management means releasing the memory area for executing the command train included in the received agent information in response to the obtainment means obtaining the reply from the external apparatus.

Further, *Yoshiaki* teaches an agent technique in distributed systems which distributes agents that automatically execute a process and automatically terminates the process. In contrast, the apparatus of claim 101 has transmission control means that controls, responsive to the control means terminating execution of the control program based on the command train, a transmission process of transmitting a process end notice to the external apparatus so as to cause a display unit of the external apparatus to display a process end confirmation window.

For at least these reasons, Applicant submits that claim 101 is patentable over *Yoshiaki*.

Independent claims 110, 112, 121, and 123 are system, method, computer program product, and computer-readable memory medium claims respectively corresponding to apparatus claim 101, and are believed to be patentable for at least the same reasons as discussed above in connection with claim 101.

The aspect of the present invention set forth in Claim 104 is an office apparatus which can be connected to a network. The office apparatus comprises reception control means for controlling a reception process of receiving agent information including a command train in which a work flow is programmed describing a series of processes to be executed in a plurality of office apparatuses. The work flow further describes a first office apparatus from the plurality of office apparatuses executing a first process and a second office apparatus from the plurality of office apparatuses executing a second process after completion of the first process by the first office apparatus. The office apparatus of claim 104 further comprises control means for controlling a processing mechanism of the office apparatus by executing, based on the command train included in the received agent information, a control program that controls the processing mechanism, execution means for executing one of the series of processes described in the work flow to be executed in the office apparatus, and transmission control means for controlling, responsive to the execution means terminating execution of the one process, a transmission process of

automatically transmitting the agent information to an external office apparatus so as to cause the external apparatus to execute the command train based on the work flow.

Among the important features of claim 104 is that the work flow further describes a first office apparatus from the plurality of office apparatuses executing a first process and a second office apparatus from the plurality of office apparatuses executing a second process after completion of the first process by the first office apparatus. Support for this feature is found at least at page 43, line 15 to page 47, line 5 of the specification describing the flowchart depicted in Figure 14. By virtue of this feature, a user, for example, can request an image processing filing job simply by describing in a work flow that office apparatus A executes the image processing and office apparatus B executes the filing of the image obtained by the image processing.

Yoshiaki discusses dividing one print job into a plurality of modules and causing a plurality of apparatuses to execute these modules. However, nothing has been found in *Yoshiaki* that teaches or suggests the recited work flow, in which one designated office apparatus from the plurality of office apparatuses executes a first process and a second designated office apparatus from the plurality of office apparatuses executes a second process after completion of the first process.

Accordingly, Applicant submits that claim 104 is clearly allowable over *Yoshiaki*.

Independent claims 111, 115, 122, and 124 are system, method, computer program product, and computer-readable memory medium claims respectively

corresponding to apparatus claim 104, and are believed to be patentable for at least the same reasons as discussed above in connection with claim 104.

The other rejected claims in this application depend from one or another of the independent claims discussed above, and, therefore, are submitted to be patentable for at least the same reasons. Since each dependent claim is also deemed to define an additional aspect of the invention, individual reconsideration of the patentability of each claim on its own merits is respectfully requested.

This Amendment After Final Action is believed clearly to place this application in condition for allowance and, therefore, its entry is believed proper under 37 C.F.R. § 1.116. Accordingly, entry of this Amendment, as an earnest effort to advance prosecution and reduce the number of issues, is respectfully requested. Should the Examiner believe that issues remain outstanding, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner contact Applicant's undersigned attorney in an effort to resolve such issues and advance the case to issue.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicant respectfully requests favorable reconsideration and early passage to issue of the present application.

Applicant's undersigned attorney may be reached in our New York Office by telephone at (212) 218-2100. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our address listed below.

Respectfully submitted,



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